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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002348

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TAGS: PHUM PREL KJUS PINS IZ

SUBJECT: MOHR TELLS AMBASSADOR GOI DOES NOT SUPPORT HUMAN RIGHTS

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2304

¶B. BAGHDAD 2252

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Minister of Human Rights Wijdan Salim told the Ambassador on July 22 that the GOI does not support human rights and threatens to undermine her ministry in its work with the Mujahedin e-Khalq (MEK) and detention facilities. She sought guidance from the Ambassador on how to deal with some of the problems she believes are worsened by the GOI's lack of respect for human rights. Referring to the July 20 meetings on the MEK (ref A), Wijdan said the Prime Minister had barred her from speaking directly to the MEK and complained that her ministry is left out of GOI discussions on the MEK. Wijdan also discussed the rise of torture in GOI detention facilities, singling out Kadhamiya Detention Facility (ref B). Wijdan's one piece of good news was the successful meeting she had recently with Saudi officials and her hopes for a future Saudi visit to Iraq. The Ambassador encouraged her to continue to press the PM and other senior officials to make human rights a priority. END SUMMARY.

#### MOHR ROLE IN THE MEK ISSUE

¶2. (C) Minister of Human Rights Wijdan Salim told the Ambassador on July 22 that the GOI does not support her ministry's work on critical issues, such as the upcoming transfer of responsibility for the Mujahedin e-Khalq (MEK) from the USG to the GOI. She said the GOI and the PM do not see the value in approaching this issue with a human rights focus. Wijdan believes that the process will be smoother, and the MEK more reassured, if the GOI is primarily represented in negotiations and visits by the Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR). The Ambassador agreed, saying that with the MoHR in the lead the discussions would clearly be apolitical, and would instead have a more positive human rights focus. Wijdan complained that her ministry is left out of GOI discussions on the MEK, and the GOI committee headed by the Ministry of Interior (MoI) does not include the MoHR in meetings. She added that no directive has come from the PM's promises to include her ministry in these meetings.

¶3. (C) Referring to the July 20 meetings on the MEK (ref A), Wijdan said the Prime Minister directed her on July 19 not to speak directly to the MEK leadership to avoid conveying legitimacy upon it. On July 20, before the meetings, Tariq Abdullah, the PM's Chief of Staff, called to remind her not to speak directly with the MEK leadership. Wijdan added that Speaker Mashadani encouraged her on July 21 to meet directly with the MEK leadership. The Ambassador recommended that during a planned July 23 meeting with Dr Tariq, the Minister raise her desire to have greater involvement in GOI discussions on the MEK, to be free to speak directly to the MEK leadership, and to travel at her discretion to Camp Ashraf with the ICRC.

#### PROBLEMS WITH GOI DETENTION OPERATIONS

¶4. (C) Wijdan claimed there has been a rise in torture cases

in GOI detention facilities, singling out MoI-run Kadhamiya Second National Police Detention Facility (ref B). Wijdan said that MoI and Ministry of Defense (MoD) have also recently blocked inspection visits to facilities by her ministry's inspection teams and MoI Inspector General Aqeel al-Taraihi. Aqeel tried to visit the MoI Kadhamiya facility to follow up on reports that the former warden of the Kadhamiya Women's Prison had been tortured (ref B), but he was refused entrance to the facility on July 21. She said there was no problem with entering Ministry of Justice (MoJ) facilities. (NOTE: There is a PM order saying the MoHR has the right to inspect any detention facility at any time. END NOTE.) Wijdan said these denials will only increase incidents of torture and abuse. Wijdan asked the Ambassador whether she should accept Mashadani's request to discuss detention operations in front of the CoR on July 24, and the Ambassador recommended she take the opportunity. (NOTE: Wijdan did so, making a statement highlighting the need for jail and prison reform and asking for branch offices of the MOHR to be opened in other ministries so human rights issues could be addressed more directly. Various CoR members responded, but none directly addressed the issues she raised.

END NOTE.)

¶5. (C) The Ambassador asked whether Deputy PM Barham Saleh's intra-governmental detentions committee was still active and included the four relevant ministries and the Baghdad Operations Center. Wijdan replied that Barham does not want to deal with these issues, and Chief Prosecutor Ghadanfer now leads the meetings. She complained that the meetings do not accomplish any real actions and do not include her ministry. She wants her ministry to be involved in the committee in

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order to address problems directly with the ministries instead of just writing letters back and forth. The Ambassador advised Wijdan to raise this with Dr. Tariq in their upcoming meeting and said he would talk to Rafaie Essawi, the new Deputy Prime Minister, about taking charge and revitalizing the committee. (NOTE: In a July 24 meeting with Rafaie Essawi, the Ambassador raised our increasing concern over GOI backsliding on the treatment of prisoners and detainees. Essawi agreed that the problem needs more GOI attention and said that he is committed to working with the Ministries of Justice, Interior and Human Rights to address it. The Ambassador also raised the issue with Barham Saleh on July 24 and advised that Wijdan is looking for more support from the GOI. Barham promised to continue supporting her work. On July 25, Barham and Wijdan announced that there would be a GOI meeting, including officials from the relevant ministries, Higher Judicial Council, and the Parliament, on July 27 to discuss the situation of detention facilities and improving amnesty implementation. Embassy officials will be attending. END NOTE.)

#### GOOD MEETINGS WITH SAUDI OFFICIALS

¶6. (C) Wijdan's one piece of good news was the successful meeting she had recently with Saudi officials about Saudi detainees in GOI and MNF-I custody (ref B). The Saudi Human Rights Commission officials requested that Saudi detainees be allowed to complete their sentences in Saudi detention, and Wijdan said the MoJ said it would honor this request, as it has in the past, as long as it receives a letter from the Saudi Government. Wijdan added that she had discussed the Saudi requests with the ICRC, which will help her ministry facilitate some of the other requests. The Ambassador recommended that she pursue a future Saudi visit to Iraq, as it would be a good gesture for strengthening Arab-Iraqi relations.

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